

is mandatory. Our Constitution requires it. Without the confirmation process, we don't know who these people are. And are these czars nothing more than a shadow government? We don't know.

The Constitution mandates visibility and oversight by Congress. That's how our government works within the bounds of our law. We don't know how many czars we have or who they are. How much do they get paid, and where does that money come from? What do they do? Who do they report to? Are they in control of the executive branch and its duties? Well, we don't know.

What are the Cabinet secretaries doing? Who reports to whom? Do the czars report to the Cabinet members? Or do the Cabinet members report to these folks? The American public does not know. We don't know because there's no oversight and no accountability, and it doesn't seem like anybody's talking. Czars haven't gone through the Senate confirmation process. Are they a national security risk? We don't know. No one knows.

Now the FBI tells us they go through a background check. But it's the same background check that the FBI does for a White House intern. These czars do not get a security clearance. That's a much more detailed background check for people with more responsibility than a White House intern. The FBI gives the information from the czar-intern background check over to the White House—that's it. And once the FBI hands the information over, they have nothing else to do with the czars. If these czars are decision-makers and policymakers, that's not acceptable. Just like Cabinet secretaries, they need to be vetted. We have to know who the people are that are in control and who controls the levers of our government. This is just common sense. The American people don't want a shadow government controlling America. Just who are the czars? We have the right to know, and Congress has the responsibility to find out.

And that's just the way it is.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. KAPTUR addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

#### HEALTH CARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. GRAYSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GRAYSON. Mr. Speaker, every once in a while, I read something that makes me wish I had written it or said it. I had that experience recently, reading Nick Kristof's column in *The New York Times*. It's just like Abraham Lincoln said during the Gettysburg Address, I read something like this and I

say, This is far beyond my poor power to add or detract. So I would like to read it to you, I would like to share it with you and the other Members of the House because it so well captures what's important in the current health care debate.

He wrote as follows:

In the debate over health care, here's an inequity to ponder: Nikki White would have been far better off if only she had been a convicted bank robber. Nikki was a slim and athletic college graduate who had health insurance, had worked in health care and knew the system. But she had systemic lupus erythematosus, a chronic inflammatory disease that was diagnosed when she was 21 and gradually left her too sick to work. And once she lost her job, she lost her health insurance.

In any other rich country, Nikki probably would have been fine, notes T.R. Reid in his important and powerful new book, *"The Healing of America."* Some 80 percent of lupus patients in the United States live a normal life span. Under a doctor's care, lupus should be manageable. Indeed, if Nikki had been a felon, the problem could have been averted, because the courts have ruled that prisoners are entitled to medical care.

As Mr. Reid recounts, Nikki tried everything to get medical care, but no insurance company would accept someone with her preexisting condition. She spent months painfully writing letters to anyone she thought might be able to help. She fought tenaciously for her life.

Finally, Nikki collapsed at her home in Tennessee and was rushed to a hospital emergency room, which was then required to treat her without payment until her condition stabilized. Since money was no longer an issue, the hospital performed 25 emergency surgeries on Nikki, and she spent 6 months in critical care.

"When Nikki showed up at the emergency room, she received the best of care, and the hospital spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on her," her stepfather, Tony Deal, told me. "But that's not when she needed the care."

By then it was too late. In 2006, Nikki White died at age 32. "Nikki didn't die from lupus," her doctor, Amylyn Crawford, told Mr. Reid. "Nikki died from complications of the failing American health care system."

"She fell through the cracks," Nikki's mother, Gail Deal, told me grimly. "When you bury a child, it's the worst thing in the world. You never recover."

We now have a chance to reform this cruel and capricious system. If we let that chance slip away, there will be another Nikki dying every half-hour.

That's how often someone dies in America because of a lack of insurance, according to a study by a branch of the National Academy of Sciences. Over a year, that amounts to 18,000 American deaths.

After al Qaeda killed nearly 3,000 Americans 8 years ago on Friday, we

went to war and spent hundreds of billions of dollars ensuring that this would not happen again. Yet every 2 months, that many people die because of our failure to provide universal insurance—and yet many Members of Congress want us to do nothing?

Mr. Reid's book is a rich tour of health care around the world. Because he has a bum shoulder, he asked doctors in many countries to examine it and make recommendations. His American orthopedist recommended a titanium shoulder replacement that would cost tens of thousands of dollars and might or might not help. Specialists in other countries warned that a sore shoulder didn't justify the risks of such major surgery, although some said it would be available free if Mr. Reid insisted. Instead, they offered physical therapy, acupuncture, and other cheap and noninvasive alternatives, some of which worked pretty well.

That's a window into the flaws in our health care system: we offer titanium shoulder replacements for those who don't really need them, but we let 32-year-old women die if they lose their health insurance. No wonder we spend so much on medical care, and yet have some health care statistics that are worse than Slovenia's.

My suggestion for anyone in Nikki's situation: commit a crime and get locked up. In Washington State, a 20-year-old inmate named Melissa Matthews chose to turn down parole and stay in prison because that was the only way she could get treatment for her cervical cancer. "If I'm out, I'm going to die from this cancer," she told a television station.

This has to end. As Mr. Kristof wrote:

Do we wish to be the only rich nation in the world that lets a 32-year-old woman die because she can't get health insurance? Is that really us?

[September 13, 2009]

THE BODY COUNT AT HOME

(By Nicholas D. Kristof)

In the debate over health care, here's an inequity to ponder: Nikki White would have been far better off if only she had been a convicted bank robber.

Nikki was a slim and athletic college graduate who had health insurance, had worked in health care and knew the system. But she had systemic lupus erythematosus, a chronic inflammatory disease that was diagnosed when she was 21 and gradually left her too sick to work. And once she lost her job, she lost her health insurance.

In any other rich country, Nikki probably would have been fine, notes T. R. Reid in his important and powerful new book, *"The Healing of America."* Some 80 percent of lupus patients in the United States live a normal life span. Under a doctor's care, lupus should be manageable. Indeed, if Nikki had been a felon, the problem could have been averted, because courts have ruled that prisoners are entitled to medical care.

As Mr. Reid recounts, Nikki tried everything to get medical care, but no insurance company would accept someone with her preexisting condition. She spent months painfully writing letters to anyone she thought might be able to help. She fought tenaciously for her life.

Finally, Nikki collapsed at her home in Tennessee and was rushed to a hospital